Fairbury's Connection to the Florida Seminole Wars

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Fairbury has many interesting connections. For example, two Fairbury men, Edward Von Tobel and Jake Beckley, helped to found the city of Las Vegas. Another interesting connection between Fairbury and the Shedd family that built the Shedd Aquarium in Chicago also exists.

There is another interesting connection between Fairbury and the Florida Seminole Wars. The story of this connection began with the first farmers who settled in the Fairbury area. These farmers had had two alternatives for paying for their farmland. The first alternative was to pay the federal government cash for their land. The official federal government price was $1.25 an acre from 1830 until 1850. By 1850, the official government price was increased to $2.50 per acre. In today's dollars, the price in 1850 of $2.50 per acre would be equivalent to $79 per acre.

In 1850, Congress passed the Script Warrant Act. This law awarded 40 acres to veterans of past wars. The past wars included the War of 1812, the Mexican War, and all Indian Wars. The vast majority of men included in this land grant were veterans of the War of 1812.

Most of the veterans of the War of 1812 lived on the East Coast of the United States. When Congress awarded them the land in 1850, these veterans were over 60 years old. Most of these veterans had no interest in moving from their homes on the East Coast to swampland in Central Illinois. Instead of claiming their Illinois land, most veterans sold their land patents to farmers who did want to move to Illinois. Veterans sold their land rights for about 30 cents an acre, which was only 12 cents on the dollar of the official government price of $2.50 per acre.

Much of Fairbury's farmland was purchased using military veteran land patents in the 1850s. One example was John Bodley Sr., who moved from Indiana to Lodemia, northwest of Fairbury. In 1853, Mr. Bodley bought 40 acres using a land patent issued to John Huffman. Mr. Huffman was a Private in Captain McManigle's Company of the Pennsylvania Militia in the War of 1812. This land has remained in the same family and is owned by Marjorie Maley today.

Another example of using a military veteran land patent was the case of William McDowell. Mr. McDowell and his family were among the earliest settlers in the Fairbury area, and they settled north of Fairbury in 1832. Mr. McDowell served as a Private in Captain Lindsey's Company in the Ohio Militia during the War of 1832. Unfortunately, Mr. McDowell died just a couple of years after arriving in Fairbury and is buried in the Avoca Cemetery. Later, in 1850, Congress passed the Script Warrant Act, which awarded

William McDowell 40 acres north of Fairbury. Since Mr. McDowell was deceased, the government awarded his land to his widow, Sarah McDowell, in 1854.

The State of Florida has a fascinating history. Spain initially claimed this state, and St. Augustine is one of the oldest cities in the United States. As the Europeans started to occupy the East Coast states, many Native Americans fled south to Florida. Although these Native Americans came from different tribes, they were eventually called the Seminole tribe.

The U.S. Government initiated the Seminole War with the Florida Native Americans. Historians identify three different wars which occurred between 1816 and 1858. The first war forced the Native Americans into one reservation in central Florida. The second war tried to force all Native Americans to leave the state and move to reservations out west. The third Seminole War forced the few remaining Native Americans from the state.

In the Seminole Wars, some Native Americans from the Creek tribe joined the U.S. Government military forces and became soldiers. After the Seminole War ended, the surviving Creek soldiers were considered veterans of the Florida War and were eligible to receive 40 acres for their service to the United States.

The land on which the Dos Fuentes Mexican restaurant is now located has a fascinating history. In the 1880s, Rufus Straight had his home and a vast clay tile factory situated on this land. Later, the Old Susannah restaurant was built on this site. The Westgate restaurant replaced it and eventually became the Dos Fuentes restaurant.

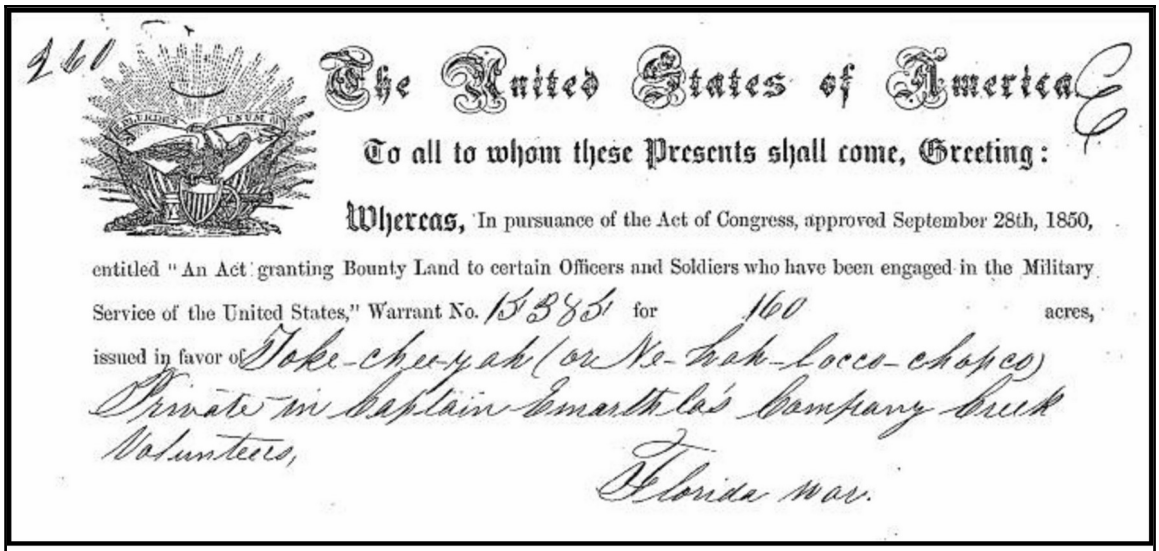
The database of land purchases maintained by the Federal Bureau of Land Management shows that David Magie purchased this land on July 1, 1854. David Magie purchased many tracts of land west of Fairbury. He was one of the three farmers who competed to have the new Peoria & Oquawka Railroad run through his farm. The successful farmer who had the tracks run through his farm could convert his inexpensive farmland to city building lots and make a great deal of money. Mr. Magie lost the competition to Caleb Patton, who promised railroad engineer Octave Chanute half the city lots if Chanute chose to run the railroad through his farm.

David Magie used military veteran land patents to purchase the land where Dos Fuentes restaurant is now located. The names of the two veterans were Toke-Chee-Yah and Ne-Hah-Locco-Chopco. They were members of the Creek Tribe and served as Privates under the command of Captain Emarthla in the Florida Wars. These two Creek tribe members had no interest in moving to the swampland in the Fairbury area and likely sold their land rights for the market price of 30 cents per acre.

The Federal Bureau of Land Management database shows that David Magie bought 15 different parcels of land around Fairbury. Mr. Magie used military veteran land patents to make all of his purchases. David Magie bought four parcels using land rights issued to four veterans of the War of 1812. Magie used military veteran land rights given to 10 different Creek tribe members who were veterans of the Florida Wars to make his other

nine purchases. These ten Creek men served in the Alabama Volunteers under Captains Emarthla, Talmary, Harjo, and Fixico.

It is a fascinating story of how farmland on Fairbury's west side is connected to the Creek Native American tribe members and the Seminole Wars in Florida. The land where the Dos Fuentes Mexican restaurant is now located was first owned by members of the Creek Native American tribe from Florida.



The United States of America

To all to whom these Presents shall come, Greeting:

Whereas, In pursuance of the Act of Congress, approved September 28th, 1850, entitled "An Act granting Bounty Land to certain Officers and Soldiers who have been engaged in the Military Service of the United States," Warrant No. 15385 for 160 acres, issued in favor of Toke-chee-yah (or No-tuk-Locco-chopco) Private in Captain Emarthla's Company Creek Volunteers, Florida war.

Top Portion of 1854 land patent transferring 160 acres from Two Veterans of the Florida War to David Magie